4

RAE CORPS NEWS LETTER

VICTORIA

EDITORIAL FEBRUARY 1993

Victorian Sappers have much to look forward to in 1993 and beyond; thanks to the sapper ingenuity and dedication of many over the last few years. In particular, we should pay tribute to BRIG Bob Slater AM for his foresight, guidance and laying a foundation for the Victorian element of the Corps which will carry it into the next century.

The ~~various~~ Sapper Associations have also been extremely active in promoting the fine traditions of the Corps. Please continue your efforts - you are an inspiration for the young "up and coming" sappers of the future. You can rely upon the support of myself and my unit commanders.

We will miss 21 Construction Squadron (the Old Red Roosters) with their impending move from Puckapunyal to Brisbane later in the year. Many fine bonds and shared experiences have been enjoyed over the years - we wish you good luck.

For the new LSF Engrs, the time ahead will present many challenges. We must concentrate particularly on our individual skills and the ability to carry out our role:

> "To provide Engineer support to the Logistic Support Force".

This is a specific and important role that will require diverse skills and sound technical and tactical training. In an environment of scarce resources, this will place heavy demands on Commanders at all levels. I particularly want to see an emphasis on the junior leader - they need challenges and must be allowed to practise their command and leadership skills.

In the next few years the LSF Engrs must establish themselves within the Australian Defence Force. We can only do this by hard work and dedication.

Over

We will be actively involved in exercise Kangaroo 95 and will need to have all our skills well honed by then.

Good Sappering and I look forward to meeting you all throughout the year.

H.R. ELLIS
Colonel
Commander

....*..0..*....

RAE CORPS COMMITTEE

Victorian Regional Subcommittee

The subcommittee met on the 24th February at Oakleigh Barracks to further Corps affairs.

Being the Senior Engineer formation in Victoria the responsiblity for the Waterloo Dinner on the 19th June fell to LSF Engrs HQ who will advise the details separately.

The accounts were considered and passed for payment which raised the question of available funds. It was decided to approach the main committee to consider a funding situation which would allow all members of the Corps to be served.

The plaster RAE plaques have been recovered from the Swan Street Depot and held for future use in a memorial. The History and Heritage Committee put up two possible suggestions but it was decided to ask LSF Engrs HQ to prepare a third more extensive proposal.

....*..0..*....

CONTENTS

A Unit History	8	Oboe One - 2/13 Fd Coy	6
Anzac Day	9		
A Letter to the Editor	3	New Ex- Sappers Assocciation	8
Brig. R. Slater - An Appreciation	9	Port Phillip Defences - South Channel Fort	4
Book Review - The Sappers War	9		
		RAE Corps Ctee - Vic. Regional S/ctee	2
Corps News Letter - Distribution	11		
		Wau - Bulldog Rd - Display	11
Dates to Remeber	8		
Fort Gellibrand Restoration	10		
From the Infantry	5		

....*..0..*....

A young man asked a father for his daughter's hand in marriage.
"Have you seen her mother?" asked the father.
"Yes Sir," replied the suitor, "quite charming; but I still prefer your daughter."

TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

Organisation of RAE (CMF) and (ARes) Units

In the September issue of the News Letter the article "Evolution of RAE in a Logistics (Works) Role" gives what to those who were not there at the time may appear to be a complete outline history of RAE (CMF) and (ARes) Units 1950 -1990, with the organization charts shown at ARMORG1 and ARMORG2. In the following I should like to show a small number of items missing from the above.

From the formation of the CMF in the late 1940s until the major reorganization in 1960 there existed RAE (CMF) Units which are neither shown on ARMORG1 nor for which one can readily find a place on an amended ARMORG1 diagram. For example, there was in Southern Command 5 Corps Field Engineer Regiment, and in Northern Command there were 4 Corps Field Engineer Regiment as well as 28 Army Field Park Squadron. There may have been other Units also.

During the National Service scheme of the 1950s there were RAE (CMF) Subunits in QUR and some other University Regiments. The fact that RAE had been successful in infiltrating for a time those bastions of ivory tower riflemen is surely of great historical interest regarding the evolution of RAE (CMF).

The third omission I should draw to readers' attention is that between ARMORG1 and ARMORG2 there has been skipped the very interesting period of the Pentropic Organization of the Australian Army, during which period Divisions had no Field Engineer Regiment.

The evolution of the whole RAE cannot, of course, be presented in one short News Letter, and the above items may have been deliberately left out because they may have been considered as not having a direct influence on the Evolution of RAE in a Logistics (Works) Role. It would have been better had the omissions been acknowledged in the article.

H.A.Johansons

....*..0..*....

Pithy Pars (cont)

From 'Probus News', Spring 1992 -

THE THREE STAGES OF MAN

The old believe everything;
The middle-aged suspect everything;
The young know everything.

PORT PHILLIP DEFENCES - SOUTH CHANNEL FORT.

The South Channel Fort is located on a man made island within Port Phillip Bay about six kilometres from Sorrento.

It was constructed by the State Government of Victoria during the 1880' specifically as a strategic fortification guarding the entrance to the South Channel shipping route. Particularly:-

1. For the protection of the submarine (mines) defences to be placed across that channel.
2. As a position wh re such mining equipment could be kept and from where the mines could be worked.
3. To bring heavy firepower to bear on hostile ships covering any attempts to remove the submarine defences.

The original armament included both 5" and 8" breehc loading guns on hydraul;ic pneumatic mountings (disappearing guns), supported by 6 pdr. quick firing (QF) guns. Coastal artillery searchlights were also employed. This fort was manned by both gunners and sappers - permanent and militia forces for training and reinforcement during times of conflict.

By WWII years this firepower was reduced to 4.7" and 6" pr. QF. guns to serve as a mine protection battery. Some short time later this armament was taken out of service with mining becoming the responsibilty of the Royal Australian Navy and the fort was decommisioned as a result.

Both the 38th and the 34th Fortress Engineer Companies (Militia) were involved, the former with Major General Sir Clive Steele (then a Captain as its final OC as a Submarine Mining Coy). During WWII members of the 34th Fortress Coy amalgamated with the 3rd Fortress Coy (PMF) to raise the Port Phillip Fortress Coy to its war establishment.

Between the war years, the Public Works made use of the secure underground magazines for the storage of explosives to be used in the underwater blasting of rock at the entrance to the Heads.

Our early Royal Engineer designers produced a unique fortification, the princples of which are set out in Michael Kitson's publication of the fort.

South Channel Island is a part of the Point Nepean National Prk and organised visits by groups (private transport) are encouraged.

The island is a well known breeding area for the Storm Petrel although they are threatened by increasing numbers of white sea gulls, and share the island with an automatic weather recording station.

A visit to the island, not withstanding the incessant screeching of the birds and the stench of their droppings, provides an ideal platform for viewing the coastline of the bay and beyond as well as providing visitors with an insight into the involvement many years ago of both coastal gunners, mining and fortress sappers - waiting at their posts "ever vigilant".

W. Goodall

FROM THE INFANTRY

The leading scout raised his arm,
in the village of Long Phouc.
He'd discovered another tunnel,
but who's going in to look.
The corporal passed the word back.
It went far behind
to let the platoon commmander know
of his recent find.
Then along came a soldier,
with mud from head to toe.
"Where's the tunnel entrance?"
was all he wanted to know.
When they showed the soldier,
he quickly looked around,
and before they could stop him,
he'd gone underground.
Now he'd be searching on his gut, I bet.
Looking out for boobies that
Ol' Charlie's set.
Then he felt the wire
stretched tight and very thin,
but he deloused the booby with a safety pin.
Then he found the weapons
leaning against the wall.
There was no doubt about it,
he'd found a real big haul.
When he finally surfaced,
wearing a big grin,
he proudly showed the diggers
what he'd found within.
Now he'd like to sit down
and roll himself a smoke,
but he'd been called forward
by another bloke.
So when you see that badge
that's like a bursting shell,
remember that this fellow
has crawled halfway through hell.
And if he's in a bar, mate,
you buy that bloke a beer;
because, Sir, you're drinking
with an Aussie engineer.

Sgt. D. Evans, 6 RAR SOUTH VIETNAM

....*..0..*....

Who says I'm old?

You know when you're getting old when:

*You feel like the morning after, but you haven't been anywhere.
*You get winded playing cards.
*You look forward to a dull evening.
*You need glasses to find your glasses.
*You turn out the light for economy, not for romance.
*Your knees buckle, but your belt won't.
*You sink your teeth into a steak and they stay there.

(Rev. Gordon Powell, Doncaster)

OBOE ONE - 2/13 Fd Coy at TARAKAN : OC MAJ J.G Foreman. MC

TARAKAN, now part of Indonesia, is an island off the east coast of Borneo, about 18 km wide and 24 km long, which in 1945 was an oil production centre, with a small town and airfield.
1 Aust Corps,(7 and 9 Divs), was given the task of taking Tarakan and North Borneo in order to re-establish Dutch and British control in those respective areas. 9 Div was allotted Tarakan, and its 26 Brigade Group was ordered to capture the island.
The group included substantial strength in addition to its normal three battalions - pioneers, armour, commandos, and extra arty.
2/13 Fd Coy, which normally supported the brigade was joined by a number of other RAE units under command of CRE 1 Corps Troops.

2/13 Fd Coy's initial tasks included the unusual and difficult one of clearing underwater obstacles on the landing beach at Lingkas, alloted to 7 and 9 Platoons, and support of 2/48 Bn and 2/9 Armd Regt in the assault phase, allotted to 8 Platoon.
Training was undertaken at Cairns and later at Morotai for the attack on obstacles comprising four to six rows of timber posts, rails and pipes. With a tidal range of 2.75m over very deep mud and low water line some 275m from the beach dunes, timing of the breaching operation was critical, as was that of the landing assault. The attack plan required four central laneways each 18m wide and eight flanking laneways each 9m wide.

All three battalions of 26 Inf Bde were to land on Lingkas Beach on P Day, fixed for 1 May 1945, and it was the task of 2/13 Fd Coy to breach the obstacles on the day before. The OC, MAJ J.G. Foreman, detailed eight detachments of six sappers for the attack and six more of five sappers as reinforcements, all under two officers, the senior being LT R.E. Dods. The attacking detachments were lifted in LVTs, also carrying MG teams, and the other teams in LCVPs. The command craft was an LCI. A supporting naval bombardment was arranged, and an aerial smoke screen, which arrived a little late for the first attack.

The operation began on time at the half ebb tide, 1100 hrs, but owing to a strong tidal set the Navy handed over to the RAE some 600m south of the target, and this delay meant a mud gap was left seaward of the outer line of obstacles. Sappers could only reach them through heavy mud waist deep, under some enemy opposition, which was suppressed by fire. A single waterproofed charge was placed at the foot of each post or rail, and all connected to primacord mains for simultaneous firing. At 1300 hrs the men were withdrawn, having finished all gaps on Green Beach, one on Yellow, but none on Red because the LVTs had grounded and stuck.

The second attack went in as planned at 1500 hrs on the flood tide. MAJ Foreman reported:
"The work proved most exhausting as the sappers had to lie flat and drag themselves to the obstacles on lifelines previously laid from each vehicle and craft engaged.
"By 1600 hrs despite continual sniping and sporadic mortar fire all gaps had been completed and marked except one on Yellow where three wooden posts were left but were considered crashable by LCMs.
"Withdrawal commenced at 1545 hrs but was not completed until 1630 hrs owing to the exhaustion of the men and the time taken to drag them through the mud to the LCVPs. A number of sappers had to wade ashore and come out to the LCVPs along the Oil Pier but all were successfully evacuated without casualty."

By the end of this operation on P minus 1 of OBOE ONE, 30 April 1945, about 780 charges had been laid. The company commander reported that the task had been so exhausting that his men were "staggering on their feet" when they were withdrawn.

The landing took place next morning, 1 May, when two battalions went ashore from LVTs and LCVPs navigated through the gaps cleared by 2/13 Fd Coy, and landed practically dry-shod.

Two NCOs of the company received immediate Military Medals for their work on 30 April.
One was L/Cpl R.C. Mace whose team finished its work on Green Beach in 35 minutes, after which :
"He withdrew his party by LVT and went to the assistance of an LCVP party on Yellow Beach who were unable to reach their objective owing to the depth of the mud. He attempted to carry a line to secure to one of the obstacles to enable the section to drag themselves to the proposed gap but sank to the shoulders in the mud and had to be dragged back through 25 yards of heavy mud. The LVT again came under mortar fire but L/Cpl Mace took the vehicle to the oil pier and under sniper fire led his team to the beach and attacked the obstacle from the shore side with complete success. By lying flat in the mud and dragging himself along he succeeded in reaching a line thrown from the LVT and evacuated his team by this means."

Lance Sergeant John Nixon was in charge of a team at Red Beach.
"Owing to the set of the tide, the LVT carrying L/Sgt Nixon's party drifted south of their objective and did not set them down until twenty minutes after the target time of 1100 hrs. The receding tide made it then necessary for them to work in waist deep mud under constant sniping with the result that the gap was not ready for blowing until 1235 hrs. The gap was then blown but four steel rails remained uncut and the section was ordered to withdraw until a second attack at 1500 hrs.
"L/Sgt Nixon was doubtful as to whether his team would be able to reach the obstacle through the mud at 1500 hrs and requested and was given permission to remain on the job until completed, despite the sniper fire.
" All matches and fuse lighters had been soaked and rendered useless in the mud and L/Sgt Nixon struggled ashore, walked along the beach to the oil pier and despite harassing fire by an LMG reached the end of the jetty and secured fresh fuse lighters from an LCVP. He then returned by the same route, reattacked, completed and signposted his gap. His LVT was hopelessly bogged approximately 50 yards from the obstacle line and L/Sgt Nixon withdrew his team along the beach and out the oil pier, signalled an LCVP and successfully evacuated his team without casualty."

For the assault phase, MAJ Foreman had under his command 2 Fd Coy less one pl, and a half pl of 5 Mech Eqpt Coy. He placed a section of 2/13 in support of each of the battalions, and two sections, later increased to three in support of the tanks. Clearance of the beach obstacles was completed. Beach development presented major problems due to mud and clay, and deep drains - also damage caused by excessive bombing.

On 7 September MAJ Foreman was forced to announce his retirement. Sadly, on 13 September, while waiting for transport home, he died in his sleep, and was buried in the cemetery being built by his sappers. His company had maintained the traditions of 9 Div Engineers.

NEW EX-SAPPER ASSOCIATIONS

It is a pleasure to hear from Major Peter Wakefield that there is an association formed in the Latrobe Valley. The Association is to be open to serving sappers and ex-sappers which would result in a strong and active association with each group being in a position to give material support and encouragement to the other. Further details and the persons to contact will be published when available.

Bruce Campbell 03-5680320 advises that letters have been sent to ex-members of 105 Construction Sqn advising of the formation of the Sqn Association to allow them to re-establish contact.

Bill Atkins 059-961013 woulf like to hear from any serving or ex-members of 3FER and 7 FER who would be interested in assisting in the reforming of the Ringwood Sapper Association.

We are heartened by the Comd. LSF Engrs, Col Ellis, in the Editorial, promising the support of senior officers. It behoves us to establish and maintain contact with them to ensure an active and fruitful relationship. In fact steps are being taken to do just that.

J. Riley

....*..0..*....

A UNIT HISTORY.

Carl Franke - Secretary of 15 Fd Coy - is commencing a rough draft of the unit history of the 15 Fd Coy and we wish his venture success. He would be glad of contributions, photographic or otherwise, from anyone having them available.

His phone number is 03- 7101394

....*..0..*....

It was late at night and two drunks, lost and far from home, were walking along a railway line.
One said to the other: "I wonder if we're going to get to the top of these bloody stairs?".
The other replied: "The stairs don't worry me, but the low handrail certainly does".

....*..0..*....

DATES TO REMEMBER
(Remember to confirm details)

GENERAL

Sun 25 Apr - Dawn Service at Oakleigh Brks.

CORPS FUNCTION

Sat 19 Jun - Waterloo Dinner

OLD SAPPERS ASSOCIATION

Sun 28 Mar - BBQ at Queenscliff

Sun 18 Apr - 2/4 Fd Sqn Reunion

Fri 23 Apr - 4 Fd Coy Reunion

Sun 24th 2/8 Fd Coy

Sun 6 Jun - Waterloo Dinner

FORT GELLIBRAND RESTORATION

Readers would be aware that Army occupies many properties of significant value. To this end the Army is committed more than ever to protecting Australia's environment and heritage. The level of this commitment stems from the Army's recognition of the importance and value of Australia's natural and cultural resources. The leading role within Army for this commitment lies with RAE through the works service.

As an example, Army through the Chief Engineer (Southern Victoria) is supporting a community based proposal to restore Fort Gellibrand at Williamstown. The Fort lies largely on Army land occupied by 2 Commando Company. A working group, chaired by the Chief Engineer has been formed to oversight restoration planning. A firm of conservation architects has been commissioned by the working group to develop a Conservation Management Plan. This plan is being funded by Army and will document the history of the site, buildings of heritage significance and propose a strategy for conservation and restoration. Considerable research assistance has been provided to the architects by Bill Goodall while another face familiar to Victorian Sappers, Jim Newlands, has recently volunteered his assistance to the working group. Similar plans are being produced for all significant Army properties.

In its own right, Fort Gellibrand is a major Heritage property. But this status is substantially enhanced by its position in the total canvas of Point Gellibrand, one of Australia's most important strips of unalienated historical land. Another plus is the extraordinarily beautiful, accessible and convenient site. The bay is its back drop, park land its principal neighbour.

Conservation and restoration work will be undertaken by the Fort Gellibrand Restoration Society - certainly there is ample scope for formal and informal Sapper support. The Society's President, Frank Colyer, must be commended for his determination in raising the necessary interest to initiate the project. Sappers wishing to become involved in the project should contact:

Frank Colyer
3 Holland Ct
NEWPORT 3050
Phone 598 8555 (B)
391 3050 (H)

LTCOL Peter Hoskins
Chief Engineer Southern Victoria
Phone 282 4211

....*..0..*....

STILL MORE MURPHY'S LAWS OF COMBAT OPERATIONS.

"Incoming fire has the right of way".
"If it's stupid and it works, it ain't stupid".
"If the enemy is in range, so are you".
"Never draw fire - it irritates everyone around you".

ANZAC DAY - 25TH APRIL.

Following the practice of previous years L.S.F.Engrs. continues to host the functions of Anzac Day outlined below:-

0530hrs Rum and coffee.

0600 - 0630 hrs. Service followed by Unit Wreath Laying. (Small hand torches an advantage.)

0700 hrs. Gunfire breakfast. $2 per head. Unit Assoc. to advise R.S.M., tel 5503900. of numbers by 7th April.

0800 hrs City buses to commence shuttle service to March with convenient point of set down.

1130hrs Bus shuttle service to Oakleigh depot from pick-up point 200m. S.E. of Shrine in Birdwood Ave. Unit Assoc, to advice numbers returning to Depot to R.S.M. by 7th April.

1500hrs. Bus shuttle return to City.

1200hrs - Unit Assoc. reunions at depot as arranged. Catering by the Old Sappers Assoc. as arranged with Jim Crosling 438 -2273 by 7th April.

Contact your Unit Assoc. for further details.

....*..0..*....

BRIG. R. SLATER - AN APPRECIATION.

At a meeting of the History and Heritage Cttee a minute of appreciation was passed recording its appreciation of the previous Comd. L.S.F.Eng, now Brig. R. Slater, for the direction and assistance he gave to the Engineer Esprit de Corps during his term in office.

The cttee wishes him well in his new appointment and knows that he will continue to be an inspiration to his present formation.

....*..0..*....

BOOK REVIEW - THE SAPPERS WAR by KEN WARD - HARVEY

$40 - $7 Pack and Post.

The above book review in the Dec Corps News Letter created some interest. Your Editor, was remiss in not including an address.

Here it is:-

Ken Ward - Harvey
20 Acton Close
RAYMOND TERRACE
N.S.W. 2324

DISPLAY - WAU - BULLDOG RD.

The display of the Wau - Bulldog Rd, foreshadowed in the last issue of the Corps News Letter has been placed at the bottom of the southern stairway at the Oakleigh Depot. In addition to the captions on the photos a brochure has been placed a side table elaborating on the works, and copies are available.

It is intended to leave the display in place until Anzac Day, after which it will be sent on tour. The tour will include:-

Ringwood Depot - 1 month
Defence Library - I month
Engineer Units at Puckapanyal - as necessary.
Engineer Archives - to be decided.

A second display is being planned which will include the personalities on the Wau - Bulldog Road together with 1 Aust Corps projects in the Middle East.

....*..0..*....

MURPHY'S LAWS OF COMBAT OPERATIONS

"Make it tough enough for the enemy to get in and you won't be able to get out."

"If you're short on anything but the enemy - you're in the combat zone."

"Anything you do can get you shot, including nothing."

....*..0..*....

CORPS NEWS LETTER DISTRIBUTION

The Corps News letter will be distributed, in bulk, without charge, to Units and Sapper Associations.

It will be mailed direct to you, upon your request on the Army Form (ME 2) below.

\- - - - - - - - - _CUT N' RUSH - - - - - - -

The Editor
Corps News Letter - Victoria
c/o Oakleigh Barracks
North Road
OAKLEIGH 3167

.....
.....
.....

Please mail to me 2/4 issues of the Corps News Letter - Victoria to the above address. My cheque for $1.50/$3 to The Treasurer Corps Fund is enclosed.

Name and Rank..... Signed .....

* * * *0* * * *

This News Letter is Edited by The Historical & Heritage Cttee. at the Oakleigh Barracks.